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Synopsises of Important Articles.

The Gospel Miracles and Historical Science.*—The assertion is made by "liberal" thinkers that historical science rejects the gospel miracles. This is a serious charge, for the conclusions of the historical science of our century have been carefully wrought out and tested and are worthy of attentive consideration. Christianity, rooted in unique facts, must subject herself to the methods of historical science to maintain by good and sufficient proofs that these *are* facts. It is shown that the most trustworthy conclusions of those historical scholars of Germany who have given themselves to the study of the gospel criticism are that the miracles, as recorded, did take place. Holtzmann, a most "liberal" critic, says: "Unless daily miracles of healing are admitted there is absolutely no gospel history." The synoptic gospels the critics regard as essentially made up of the recollection of Christ's companions. The miracles recorded in them are accepted by such men as Holtzmann and Weiss. Not that historical science can prove them to be supernatural; such a conclusion cannot be reached in this sphere of investigation; it can only show that they are facts. But this it does show upon the basis of the latest and most approved methods of investigation, going to the sources which lie nearest to the time of Jesus and the origin of Christianity, weighing and testing them, finding in them an essentially true record of the life of the Christ, "whose character shines with majestic beauty through the incidents they narrate."

A plain but thoroughly satisfactory statement of the results of New Testament investigation. It meets fairly the rash assertions of some recent writers who have represented these results as wholly unfavorable to the Gospels.

Two Parables.†—The parables of The Prodigal Son and The Labourers in the Vineyard have little resemblance in external form, yet the teaching of the two is closely similar. Each has a main lesson, each a secondary lesson. 1) The main teaching of the Prodigal is that God is willing to welcome repentant prodigals and that men ought to welcome them. The kindred teaching of the Labourers is that those who enter God's service late in life shall receive an equal reward with those who have served God all their lives, i. e., that mere length of service does not count in the distribution of heavenly rewards. 2) The secondary lesson of the Prodigal parable is a warning, not that those who habitually keep Christ's commandments are in danger of losing their eternal reward for a fit of sullenness or anger, but against the special dangers of a life spent from its beginning in the habitual service of God. In the Labourers' parable the same secondary teaching is found, viz., that those who have served God all their lives, or in any eminent way, are in danger of trusting in their own services rather than in the grace of God, and of regarding with jealousy those who are placed on an equality with them after a shorter period of service or after services which from a human point of view appear but small. The antidote for such errors is a truer appreciation of the divine privileges and blessings which come to God's children on condition of faith. If grace is recognized, jealousy is thereby excluded. Otherwise they are least in the kingdom of Heaven. The ordinary view of the elder brother and the all-day laborers is too hard on them. The faults of temper displayed by them and by

* By Professor E. Y. Hincks in *The Andover Review*, June, 1889, pp. 561-569.

† By John Joseph Murphy in *The Expositor*, April, 1889, pp. 290-303.

very many disciples of Christ since then, are not by any means faults of wickedness, but are chiefly due to deficiency of imagination. They are not typical Christians, nor are the eleventh hour laborers and the prodigal. The typical Christian is the elder brother reconciled to the prodigal; the all-day laborers graciously willing to be placed on an equality with one who came at the eleventh hour.

Nothing particularly striking is to be found in this article except its comparison of the two parables and the attention given to the episodes of the elder brother and the objections of the all-day laborers. The application of the teaching which they convey is certainly fresh and impressive.

The First Temptation of our Lord.*—In the desert he is engaged in forming the plan for the creation of a spiritual humanity of a superior order. The temptations are surveys of the situation giving rise to competitions of methods. The Bread Problem of the world confronts him. This food problem, the physical basis of man, suggests certain modifications of his plan. Note three introductory explanations. 1) These temptations are mental and spiritual, as shown in the third scene of the mountain and in the fact that two different orders of the temptations are given. 2) The account is poetry, not history, in which the divine theory of Christ's situation is pictured. 3) The temptations are distributed over the whole period. The first temptation has nothing to do with Christ's hunger. He becomes hungry after they are over. The real trial is not addressed to hunger, but to Christ's philanthropy. Every temptation is a revelation; this a revelation of the forces needed to make men Christian; a temptation to the use of inferior forces. The natural basis of this temptation is the Bread Problem of this world and its relations both to the comfort of men and the spiritualities of Christ. The normal condition of man is one of bare subsistence. Will he who has the power make this condition easier? Will not he who sympathizes with human need provide relief? This problem of bread must be considered by Jesus. He solves it 1) by revealing the ground-plan of our being; the primitive element in man being the sense of God. It will not touch man's central need to make him more comfortable. 2) He lets the natural law of poverty alone and introduces other and spiritual laws which regenerate humanity. 3) He utilizes this struggle for bread by converting it into a moral force. Out of this struggle we are to rise into higher being. A religion which brings comfort and ease would be worse than no religion. 4) Crucifixion is the redemptive element. Divinity alone is not sufficient. Divinity and death make the true bread of man. Happiness must be preceded by holiness. Self-denial is the law of true life. 5) The message to the church is that her radical work is missions, not charities. These last will come from enthusiasms born of faith and love and worship.

This article contains some stimulating material upon the temptations of Christ. It is weakened by an evident straining after effect and a desire to say something new in a striking way. Careful readers will find much that is merely speculative regarded as established fact. The view that all the temptations were addressed to the unselfish, the philanthropic in Jesus Christ has many attractive features. With some exceptions as to the style and theological peculiarities of the writer, the discussion will be found bright and helpful.

Historical Situation in Joel and Obadiah.†—(1) The subject of Joel is "the day of Jehovah" as (a) a day of chastisement to Zion, (b) a day of recovery for Zion, and of judgment for the nations. (2) The first part of the book mentions three events: (a) a calamity of locusts (1:4-9; 2:1-11a); (b) a calamity of drouth (1:10-13; 1:14-20); (c) rule of foreign enemies (2:11b-17). (3) The second part mentions, by way of introduction, Jehovah's answer to his people (2:18, 19a); and

* By Rev. W. W. Peyton in *The Expositor*, May, 1889, pp. 369-391.

† By Prof. Willis J. Beecher, D.D., in the *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, June and December, 1888, pp. 14-40.